ACADEMIC QUALITY COMMITTEE

2:00pm – 4:00pm, Tuesday 10 July 2018
Senate Room, Quadrangle (A14)

Members Present: Associate Professor Wendy Davis (Chair); Donald Tochukwu Azuatalam (PG Student); Dr Vasiliki Betihavas (for Jane Currie); Dr Betty Chaar (Pharmacy); Kubra Chambers (Director, Institutional Analytics & Planning); Professor Rae Cooper (Business); Professor Mark Gorrell (Medicine); Imogen Grant (President, SRC); Dr Christopher Hartney (Academic Board Representative); Professor Deb Hayes (for Associate Professor Alyson Simpson); Jeffrey Kho (UG Student); Associate Professor Tony Masters (Chair of Academic Board); Dr Slade Matthews (Academic Board Representative); Associate Professor Peter McCallum (Director, Educational Strategy) (for Professor Pip Pattison); Associate Professor Kathleen Nelson (Chair, HDRESC);

Attendees: Helen Agus (Member, Academic Board) (for Item 4.1); Dr Matthew Charet (Secretary); Professor Geoffrey Clarke (Member, Academic Board and HDRESC); Dr Glenys Eddy (Committee Officer, Secretariat); Tristan Enright (Manager, Educational Integrity) (for Item 4.1); Sally Pearce (Manager, Special Projects, IAP); Associate Professor Tim Wilkinson (Chair, Admissions Sub-Committee).

Apologies: Dr Tooran Alizadeh (Architecture, Design & Planning); Associate Professor Javid Atai (Engineering & IT); Professor Matthew Conaglen (Law); Jane Currie (Nursing) (Dr Vasiliki Betihavas attending instead); Ayman Ellawa (Dentistry); Dr Mark Halaki (Health Sciences); Professor Pip Pattison (Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education)) (Associate Professor Peter McCallum attending instead); Dr Carl Schneider (Academic Board Representative); Associate Professor Alyson Simpson (Arts & Social Sciences) (Professor Deb Hayes attending instead).

MINUTES

1 WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

Apologies were noted as recorded above.

2 PROCEDURAL MATTERS

2.1 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 May 2018 were confirmed as a true record, as presented.

Resolution AQC18/4-1
The Academic Quality Committee resolved that the minutes of meeting 3/2018, held on 8 May 2018, be confirmed as a true record.

2.2 Action Schedule / Business Arising

Members noted the updates to business arising.

Resolution AQC18/4-2
The Academic Quality Committee noted updates on business arising.

3 STANDING ITEMS

3.1 Report of the Chair

The Chair advised that she had nothing to report.

Resolution AQC18/4-3
The Academic Quality Committee noted the report of the Chair.

3.2 Report of the Academic Board

The Chair of Academic Board advised that he had nothing to add to the written report.

Resolution AQC18/4-4
The Academic Quality Committee noted the report of the Academic Board meeting held on 12 June 2018.

3.3 Report of the HDR Examinations Sub-Committee

Associate Professor Nelson highlighted the Sub-Committee's discussion of theses including publications, noting the need for better staff and student awareness of the relevant policy to ensure compliance. In discussion, this was highlighted as a common question asked by HDR students. The Sub-Committee recommends that better information be provided on HDR student-facing websites and should be publicised as broadly as possible by circulation to faculties and SUPRA.

Members were also informed that the report includes the First Quarter 2018 examination statistics and were invited to provide feedback on the format of the data presented. The inclusion of a domestic / international breakdown was requested, as well as identification of scholarship holders if possible. It was suggested that the UE Research Education Committee be invited to consider this latter, with anecdotal testimony that on average, scholarship-holders take longer to submit.

Resolution AQC18/4-5
The Academic Quality Committee noted the reports of the HDR Examinations Sub-Committee meetings of 29 May and 26 June 2018, as presented.

Action 12/2018: Request the UE Research Education Committee to investigate possible correlation between HDR scholarships and timeliness of thesis submission. Responsible: Secretary. Timing: As soon as possible.

4 ITEMS FOR ACTION

4.1 Towards an Institutional Response to Contract Cheating

The Director, Educational Strategy, informed members that a campaign has been underway since 2017 focussed on contract cheating, with a suspicion that our data is not capturing the full extent of the issue. This campaign has had several key foci. These include an awareness campaign to ensure that students are cognisant of the dangers of using contract cheating services (which extend beyond the academic risks into potential breaches of privacy and financial fraud). There is a need for staff to raise student awareness, to develop tools to deal with suspected infringement, and to structure assessment to discourage cheating. Members were informed that text-matching tool Turnitin is developing mechanisms for analysis of writing styles, which may assist in detection, and the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education) is keen for the University to participate in a pilot of this. Further work is also needed on policies and procedures, as well as raising staff and student awareness of current policies and adjusting the current academic integrity training module to directly address contract cheating.

The Manager, Educational Integrity, informed members that approximately one third of all allegations of cheating or sharing arise from contract cheating. A tactical review of non-academic policies (such as venue booking by external bodies and provision of UniKey details to cheating sites) is called for, and campus advertising by cheating services is also being addressed. The volume of students involved in awareness campaigns is encouraging, as is an ongoing multi-institutional discovery discussion to address interactions with cheating sites (which resist take-down requests). This includes a $20 million budget allocation to TEQSA to address this issue nationally, as well as work being undertaken by the CSIRO. It is acknowledged, however, that legislation is “some way off.”

In discussion, it was recommended that communication plans to staff include all forms of plagiarism, as many staff have expressed the need for support in forceful decision making in this area (especially maintaining a balance between encouraging discipline and potentially ‘ruining’ a student’s life). Investigation into patterns of student involvement in cheating behaviours may also provide insight into how we might better address this, as might closely involving students in the development of institutional strategies. Preliminary findings suggest that, at present, students who do not cheat are not particularly concerned that others do so, and influencing this is another avenue to explore (as cheating devalues the reputation of the institution as a whole, affecting the qualifications of all students). The importance of academic honesty to professional disciplines was
also highlighted, as acceptable standards of ethical behaviour need to be inculcated in the early stages of candidature. A non-punitive, educational approach seems to work best to do this.

The Committee endorsed the paper as presented.

Resolution AQC18/4-6
The Academic Quality Committee:
(1) endorsed and provided feedback on the initiatives proposed by the Office of Educational Integrity to address the risks posed by contract cheating; and
(2) agreed to recommend that the Academic Board note the issues and initiatives outlined in this report.

4.2 2017 Faculty-level Appeals Reporting

The Chair drew the attention of members to the reports circulated with the agenda, noting that several faculties had yet to submit. In discussion, it was observed that faculties engage with student appeals in a variety of ways and that some faculties have a clear process for appeals as well as clear communication with students through that process. Completeness of data had proven challenging for some due to difficulties in extracting information from unit of study coordinators. The Director, Educational Strategy advised that development of an online workflow tool is being explored for University-level appeals (including a database and lodgement tool), and this could be extended to cover faculty-level appeals. This would allow for central collection of data for appeals as well as lighten the workload for cases that escalate to the Student Appeals Body, as information about escalated cases would already be in the system. Members were strongly supportive of this, although the introduction of a new faculty-level system at the moment (while other changes are still being implemented) was flagged as a likely pressure point. It was also recommended that for faculty-level appeals, exclusion-related cases should continue to use the reporting system currently in place.

It was agreed that appeals reporting would be revisited at the next meeting, by which time it is anticipated the remaining faculties will have returned their data. It was also agreed that a working group be convened to develop guidelines for students wishing to submit appeals, including clear distinction between an appeal and a complaint.

Resolution AQC18/4-7
The Academic Quality Committee noted the reports on 2017 Faculty-level appeals data, as presented.

Action 13/2018: Set up working group to draft appeals guidelines. Responsible: Chair. Timing: As soon as possible.

4.3 Course Monitoring

The Chair reminded members that an updated draft monitoring report had been circulated before the meeting and the Director, IAP, sought guidance as to what data should be monitored to trigger investigation of an award course. This could include, for example, sudden changes in performance in metrics such as EFTSL or teaching quality. An online version of the report – which includes over 700 award courses – was also demonstrated to members. Members noted that the report includes filtering within a range of categories, including by faculty, type or level of course, to enable easier identification of trends or more focussed interrogation of local-level data.

In discussion, members expressed enthusiasm at the level of detail available in the dashboard, while noting that a glossary of key terms would also be helpful (the Director, IAP advised that this is in the background and may be able to be linked to the dashboard). The usefulness of including statistics on new courses that have yet to teach a full degree sequence was questioned, as was the inclusion of courses no longer admitting students. Members were also advised that the report currently excludes courses with fewer than ten enrolments, as these can skew comparative data. It was suggested that it may be better to hold this data in the system and allow individuals to filter it for removal rather than excluding it from the system entirely.

Members agreed that, at the next meeting, they would investigate the report itself to determine what markers could be used to identify courses for further scrutiny. To enable preparation for this, a link to the report would be circulated prior to the meeting so members can explore the tool. Agreement on triggers for investigation could then be used by IAP to form the basis of regular (semester or annual) reports for the Committee’s consideration.
Resolution AQC18/4-8
The Academic Quality Committee reviewed the proposed Course Pulse Report and agreed to discuss measures for identifying courses for further review at the next meeting.


4.4 Academic Honesty Flow Chart
The Chair of Academic Board advised members that he had prepared draft flowcharts for coursework-relate appeals to assist academic staff to better understand the Academic Honesty process. Members were informed that flowcharts are provided by the Office of Educational Integrity to Education Integrity Coordinators, and that ‘hints and tips’ on how to interpret University policy and procedures in this area would be useful.

The Chair of Academic Board invited further feedback to be returned of directly to him.

Resolution AQC18/4-9
The Academic Quality Committee provided feedback on the draft flow chart for investigating breaches of academic honesty, as presented.

5 ITEMS FOR NOTING

5.1 Education Strategic Initiative Indicators (SIIs): 2017 Performance and 2018 Targets
In the absence of Dr Bartimote-Aufflick, the Director, Educational Strategy recommended that any feedback on the written reports for this item and Item 5.2 below, be communicated directly to Dr Bartimote-Aufflick.

Resolution AQC18/4-10
The Academic Quality Committee noted the Education Strategic Initiative Indicators (SIIs): 2017 Performance and 2018 Targets paper, as presented.

5.2 Student Graduate Trajectories Survey 2018 Summary Report
Refer to Item 5.1 above.

Resolution AQC18/4-11
The Academic Quality Committee noted the Student Graduate Trajectories Survey 2018 Summary Report, as presented.

6 OTHER BUSINESS

6.1 Any Other Business

There being no other business, the meeting concluded at 4:06pm.

Next meeting: 2:00pm – 4:00pm, Tuesday 4 September 2018
Senate Room, Quadrangle